

Substance Use and Gambling: Pros and Cons

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- students will understand that there are both positive and negative consequences to using drugs, including alcohol, and gambling
- students will explore the balance of positive and negative effects of drugs and gambling in their lives

CONTENT AND TIME (30-MINUTE LESSON)

- 2.1 Introduction: Substance Use and Gambling: Pros and Cons (15 minutes)
- 2.2 Activity: Balloon Frantic (15 minutes)

REQUIRED MATERIALS

HANDOUT 2.1: The Good and the Not-so-good
HANDOUT 2.2: The Balance Beam

2.1 Introduction: Substance Use and Gambling: Pros and Cons (15 minutes)

The use of alcohol, other drugs, and gambling can have an impact on many areas of our lives. Our physical health, leisure activities, relationships with others, emotional health, employment, finances, education, and our spiritual well-being can all be affected. For some people, the use of alcohol, other drugs, or gambling results in more positive effects than negative effects. For example, they may feel relaxed, have more fun at parties, or feel more creative. However, as people increase their use, the likelihood of negative effects increases. They may begin to feel depressed, experience problems concentrating, lose friends, or start making risky decisions like drinking and driving.

It is important to understand that using drugs or gambling can have both positive and negative consequences. We wouldn't continue to do something if it didn't have some kind of reward. People make choices about their use based on their views of the balance between the positive and negative consequences. Refer to the balance beam handout to help illustrate this concept. Most people stay at #1, a few move on to #2, while even fewer move to #3.

As someone's use of alcohol, other drugs, or gambling increases in frequency and duration, it is likely that they will start to have more negative consequences in the following areas of their lives: physical health, emotional health, school or employment, leisure, relationships, finances, and spiritual. When we examine a person's use of substances or gambling, these are the areas we look at. If their use of alcohol, other drugs, or gambling is having a negative impact on one or more of these areas, their use may be becoming harmful or problematic.

2.2 Activity

Balloon Frantic

(10 minutes)

Students are each given a balloon on which they must write a word, and black felt markers to write it with. This word represents something that has a lot of meaning to the person, e.g., their family, friends, sports, money, etc. Ask them to be very specific about what is important to them. The students are invited to share their word with the group.

Next the students are asked to keep those balloons aloft, never allowing them to touch the ground. They may keep them aloft by hitting them with their hands, heads, knees, etc. After they have done this for awhile, ask them to hold the balloon and discuss how hard it was to keep something so important to them up. It takes a lot of work to keep the things that are important from falling. Now, ask them to try to keep the balloons aloft without using their hands. This is what it is like to use drugs or gamble and not have all your abilities or senses available to keep these important things up.

DEBRIEF

Was it frustrating trying to keep the balloon in the air?

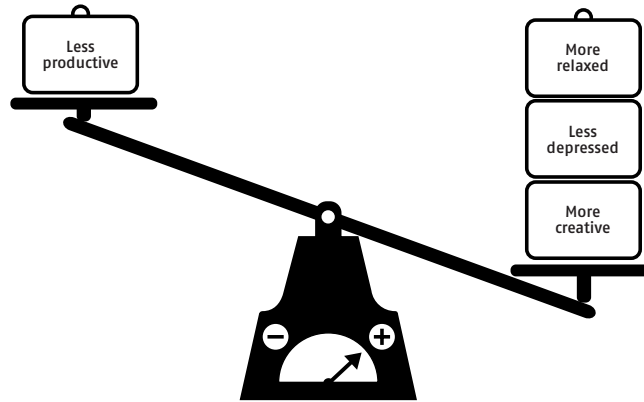
- How did it feel when you dropped the balloon?
- Did you need help from other people to keep the balloon in the air?
- Would others have been able to help you if they weren't able to use their hands either?
- Why do you think people make the choice to start using drugs or gambling?
- What other choices could they make instead of using drugs or gambling?

The Good and Not-so-good

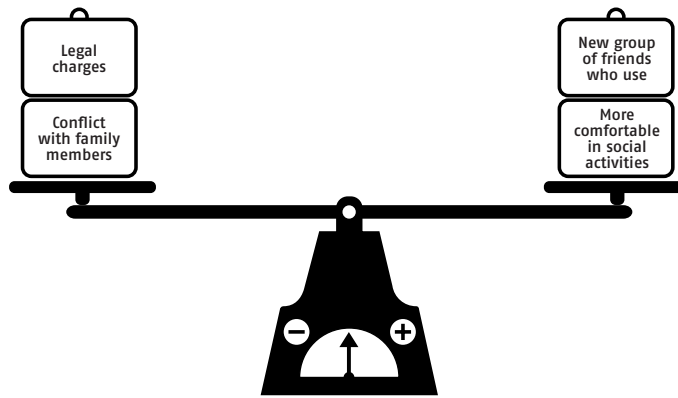
List some good and not-so-good things about using alcohol, drugs, or gambling for each of the following life areas:

	GOOD THINGS	NOT-SO-GOOD THINGS
Physical Health	eg., relaxation _____ _____	eg., hangovers _____ _____
Emotional Health	eg., escape from problems _____ _____	eg., depression _____ _____
School/Job	eg., socializing _____ _____	eg., poor concentration _____ _____
Leisure	eg., relieves boredom _____ _____	eg., takes away from other activities _____ _____
Relationships	eg., feel more confident _____ _____	eg., can get in the way of friendships _____ _____
Financial	eg., win money on betting _____ _____	eg., spend money on substances or gambling _____ _____
Spiritual	eg., reduces anxiety _____ _____	eg., no other spiritual outlet _____ _____

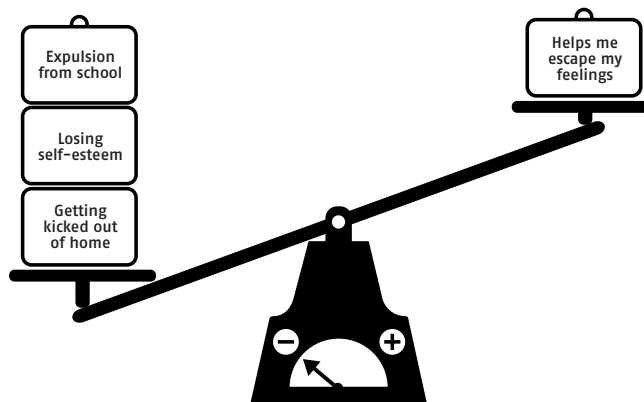
The Balance Beam



Positives outweigh negatives.



Positives and negatives are about equal.



Negatives outweigh the positives.